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Walking Home

By Masood Ashraf Raja

(Occasioned by the 2008-09 Israeli bombing of Gaza)

Like three dolls in a toy bed
One girl, two little boys
With peaceful faces, eyes closed
No wounds, no blood—a clean death

The girl, a smile etched on her face
Dreaming, probably, of a better place
The boys, holding hands, unsmiling
Like guardian angels walking their sister home:

Through bombed streets of the walled city
Jumping over trash, avoiding piss and blood
Through ranks of soldiers, columns of tanks
Breathing gunpowder, smoke, phosphorous

Carrying their sister across the wall
To a city of light, cafes, and pristine streets
They stop in front of a candy store
Silent, hopeful, cautious, a bit afraid

Then one of them, the one in blue jeans
A white t-shirt and a black baseball hat,
Enters, after wiping his feet on the door mat
In his stretched hand a Jordanian coin

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Found in a dusty Gaza street, right
By the deserted, defunct Bus stop.
Sir, he says to the man in the candy store
Sir, my sister would like an orange drop.